

## IN THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A method of screening for therapeutic agents useful in the treatment of a disease selected from the group ~~comprised in a group of diseases~~ consisting of cardiovascular diseases, dermatological diseases, endocrinological diseases, metabolic diseases, cancer, gastroenterological diseases, muscle-skeleton diseases, neurological diseases, respiratory diseases, inflammation and urological diseases in a mammal, comprising the steps of

i) contacting a test compound with a NPEPPS polypeptide, and

ii) detecting ~~detect~~ binding of said test compound to said NPEPPS polypeptide.

2. (currently amended) A method of screening for therapeutic agents useful in the treatment of a disease selected from the group ~~comprised in a group of diseases~~ consisting of cardiovascular diseases, dermatological diseases, endocrinological diseases, metabolic diseases, cancer, gastroenterological diseases, muscle-skeleton diseases, neurological diseases, respiratory diseases, inflammation and urological diseases in a mammal, comprising the steps of

i) determining ~~the~~ activity of a NPEPPS polypeptide at a certain concentration of a test compound or in the absence of said test compound, and

ii) determining the activity of said polypeptide at a different concentration of said test compound.

3. (currently amended) A method of screening for therapeutic agents useful in the treatment of a disease ~~comprised in a group of diseases~~ consisting of cardiovascular diseases, dermatological diseases, endocrinological diseases, metabolic diseases, cancer, gastroenterological diseases, muscle-skeleton diseases, neurological diseases, respiratory diseases, inflammation and urological diseases in a mammal, comprising the steps of

- i) determining the activity of a NPEPPS polypeptide at a certain concentration of a test compound, and
- ii) determining the activity of a NPEPPS polypeptide at the presence of a compound known to be a regulator of a NPEPPS polypeptide.
4. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 ~~any of claims 1 to 3~~, wherein the step of contacting is in or at the surface of a cell.
5. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 ~~any of claims 1 to 3~~, wherein the cell is *in vitro*.
6. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 ~~any of claims 1 to 3~~, wherein the step of contacting is in a cell-free system.
7. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 ~~any of claims 1 to 3~~, wherein the polypeptide is coupled to a detectable label.
8. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 ~~any of claims 1 to 3~~, wherein the compound is coupled to a detectable label.
9. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 ~~any of claims 1 to 3~~, wherein the test compound displaces a ligand which is first bound to the polypeptide.
10. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 ~~any of claims 1 to 3~~, wherein the polypeptide is attached to a solid support.
11. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 ~~any of claims 1 to 3~~, wherein the compound is attached to a solid support.
12. (currently amended) A method of screening for therapeutic agents useful in the treatment of a disease selected from the group ~~comprised in a group of diseases~~ consisting of cardiovascular diseases, dermatological diseases, endocrinological diseases, metabolic diseases,

cancer, gastroenterological diseases, muscle-skeleton diseases, neurological diseases, respiratory diseases, inflammation and urological diseases in a mammal, comprising the steps of

- i) contacting a test compound with a NPEPPS polynucleotide, and
- ii) detecting ~~detect~~ binding of said test compound to said NPEPPS polynucleotide.

13. (original) The method of claim 12 wherein the nucleic acid molecule is RNA.

14. (original) The method of claim 12 wherein the contacting step is in or at the surface of a cell.

15. (original) The method of claim 12 wherein the contacting step is in a cell-free system.

16. (original) The method of claim 12 wherein polynucleotide is coupled to a detectable label.

17. (original) The method of claim 12 wherein the test compound is coupled to a detectable label.

18. (currently amended) A method of diagnosing a disease selected from the group ~~comprised in a group of diseases~~ consisting of cardiovascular diseases, dermatological diseases, endocrinological diseases, metabolic diseases, cancer, gastroenterological diseases, muscle-skeleton diseases, neurological diseases, respiratory diseases, inflammation and urological diseases in a mammal comprising the steps of

- i) determining the amount of a NPEPPS polynucleotide in a sample taken from said mammal, and
- ii) determining the amount of NPEPPS polynucleotide in healthy and/or diseased mammals.

19-20. (canceled)

21. (currently amended) A pharmaceutical composition for the treatment of a disease ~~selected from the group comprised in a group of diseases~~ consisting of cardiovascular diseases, dermatological diseases, endocrinological diseases, metabolic diseases, cancer, gastroenterological diseases, muscle-skeleton diseases, neurological diseases, respiratory diseases, inflammation and urological diseases in a mammal, comprising a therapeutic agent which regulates the activity of a NPEPPS polypeptide, wherein said therapeutic agent is

- i) a small molecule,
- ii) an RNA molecule,
- iii) an antisense oligonucleotide,
- iv) a polypeptide,
- v) an antibody, or
- vi) a ribozyme.

22. (currently amended) A pharmaceutical composition for the treatment of a disease ~~selected from the group comprised in a group of diseases~~ consisting of cardiovascular diseases, dermatological diseases, endocrinological diseases, metabolic diseases, cancer, gastroenterological diseases, muscle-skeleton diseases, neurological diseases, respiratory diseases, inflammation and urological diseases in a mammal, comprising a NPEPPS polynucleotide.

23. (currently amended) A pharmaceutical composition for the treatment of a disease ~~selected from the group comprised in a group of diseases~~ consisting of cardiovascular diseases, dermatological diseases, endocrinological diseases, metabolic diseases, cancer,

gastroenterological diseases, muscle-skeleton diseases, neurological diseases, respiratory diseases, inflammation and urological diseases in a mammal, comprising a NPEPPS polypeptide.

24-26. (canceled)